

# Let's Go to the Fair!

In 1904, the World's Fair was held in Missouri. The Fair was hosted by the city of St. Louis. It lasted from April 30 to December 1, 1904. Nearly 20 million people visited the fair. Have you been to a fair? If you have, then probably one of your favorite parts was the carnival. Fairs that were held long ago were also for enjoyment, but more than that, they were meant to be educational. A World's Fair gave visitors the opportunity to see the newest agricultural technology. The fair also gave visitors the opportunity to experience new foods. Here are some items that probably were introduced at the 1904 World's Fair:

## Hot Dogs!



Many historians believe that the first hot dogs were served at the 1904 World's Fair. Why were they called Hot Dogs? No one is sure, but some say that the signs at booths selling the first hot dogs, sometimes said something like, "Hot Dog!, they are good!". Others say that they were called Hot Dogs because some people jokingly said that hot dogs were made from dogs! Of course, that was not true!

## Popsicles



The first popsicles were called Fruit Icicles. They were not frozen on a stick like today. They were frozen in a tin tube. When you held the tube in your warm hand, the frozen juice slowly melted and could be sipped.

## Ice Cream Cones



An ice cream vendor did not have enough cups, so he used some waffles from another booth, rolled them and sold the first ice cream cones. Maybe ice cream cones were the most famous agricultural product from the 1904 fair.

## Iced Tea

One vendor was selling hot tea, which was usually a popular drink in 1904. However, hot tea was not selling well during the hot St. Louis summer. He tried pouring hot tea over ice and soon found that fair visitors really liked it!

## Fast Food



It is difficult to say if fast food was really invented, but the 1904 fair was the first fair that had so much electricity available. Electricity allowed a steak to be cooked in 6 minutes, which was pretty fast for 1904. McDonald's was still 50 years in the future!

## Electricity



The huge palaces that were built for the World's Fair had electricity. At night, many were outlined with colorful lights. The beautiful displays dazzled many of the fair visitors who were from rural areas. It would be many years before they would have electricity on farms.

## The Observation Wheel

Have you ridden or seen a Ferris Wheel? Do you think the Ferris Wheels of today are larger or smaller than the one at the 1904 World's Fair? Think about this. The Wheel held more than 2,000 people. Each of the cars on it held 60 people! In other words, each car on the great Wheel was the size of one of your school busses. Imagine 36 school busses on a Ferris Wheel! Although not new, the Observation Wheel had been brought to St. Louis from Chicago, but after the 1904 World's Fair, no one wanted it, so it was torn down.

Do we still have big fairs? There are no longer World's Fairs as big as the one held in St. Louis in 1904. However, every summer, Missouri has a large State Fair. It is held each August in Sedalia. It has many historic buildings and is both educational and a lot of fun. Maybe you can go sometime!

## Critical Thinking about Electricity

Many World's Fair visitors were excited to see electric lights at night at the fair. Many of these visitors lived on farms and they did not have electricity yet. If you did not have electricity in your home, what would you have to do differently? Work with other students and make a list of things that farmers need electricity for on their farms. Your group should also think about problems that farmers would have if they did not have any electricity.

## Critical Thinking about Cultures

Representatives of various foreign cultures were brought to St. Louis to be put on display at the World's Fair for visitors to observe. Discuss with your group what it must have been like to be a child whose family was on display all day everyday from April to October, 1904. Discuss whether you think this was a good way to learn about other cultures. How would you have presented these different cultures?

The Observation Wheel